



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 August 2019

by Tim Crouch DipUD MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Friday, 13 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/W/19/3230156

Sunfield, Townsend Road, Streatley, Reading RG8 9LH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs Stuart Pratley against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02700/FULD, dated 15 August 2018, was refused by notice dated 15th April 2019.
 - The development proposed is new house & garage block.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on;
 - The character and appearance of the area, including the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
 - The living conditions of neighbouring occupiers with particular regard to outlook; and,
 - The safety of highway users.

Reasons

Character of the area

3. The appeal site fronts Wallingford Road and is one of the first sites as you enter Streatley from the north. The site lies close to the open countryside and this character is reflected in the spacious setting of dwellings alongside the road. These are positioned within landscaping and with generous gaps between buildings and are mostly 2 storey, giving the area an open, spacious and verdant character.
4. The proposal also lies within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Policy CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2012) (CS) requires the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape character to be conserved and enhanced and paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs.

5. The proposal would introduce a new dwelling of three floors of living accommodation, with a substantial roof form. The building would extend the majority of the width of the plot at full height, although with a pitched roof on the boundary with the property known as 'Wayside' and keeping a minimum 1 metre separation from all boundaries. This height and width would result in a building of significant bulk and scale and dominate the proposed plot, leaving limited gaps between buildings and appearing harmful to the spacious character and appearance of the area. This harmful scale would be exacerbated by the proposed positioning significantly forward of the neighbouring buildings, and the design extending close to the road. The glazed ridge would also draw attention to its height. This would be incongruous within the streetscene.
6. I have had regard to the new 2 storey dwelling previously approved¹ in a similar position on site. However, from the information provided, the permitted main building appears to be lower and significantly less wide, with a single storey garage close to the boundary, better assimilating with the spacious character of the area. I also note that the main building has a hipped roof form to both sides, further reducing the bulk and scale of the roof. Whilst the proposed increase in height, width and design may be considered minor to the appellant in isolation, taken together these result in a building out of scale with the character and appearance of the area.
7. I also recognise that the proposal has a ridge height lower than the neighbouring properties. However, these buildings are set back, including the replacement dwelling under construction at Wayside², and away from the shared boundaries. This retains a sense of openness to front and sides, which is materially different from this appeal scheme.
8. Overall, I consider the proposal would be out of keeping with its surroundings in terms of the scale, height and design of the proposed dwelling, and the limited separation distances to the side boundaries. The proposal does not address the characteristics of the street scene and wider surroundings and as such it would represent an incongruous and unsympathetic form of development that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and fail to conserve or enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape character and AONB.
9. The application therefore conflicts with chapter 15 of the Framework, policies ADPP1, ADPP5, CS14 and CS19 of the CS, the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2014-19, and the Council's adopted Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document (2006) (SPD).

Living conditions

10. The proposal would fill the majority of the width of the plot due to its height and breadth. This, combined with the strong built form of the existing property known as 'Sunfield', would have a significant enclosing effect on the outlook of the rear garden of the property known as 'Mayfield'. Whilst the proposal is set back from this boundary, with a roof slope away and to a similar height to the permitted scheme, the combination of the height, extent of built form and the loss of openness on its eastern side would be overbearing and detrimental to the living conditions of the occupiers of Mayfield. The design, including strong

¹ Council Planning Ref 17/01476/FULD

² Council Planning Ref 18/01998/FULD

gable features and glazing would also accentuate its presence and add to this harm.

11. Therefore, the proposal would be harmful to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers with regard to outlook. Consequently, it would be contrary to the Framework, Policy CS14 of the CS, and guidance within the SPD. Taken together and amongst other objectives, these require development to make a positive contribution to the quality of life in West Berkshire

Highway safety

12. The proposal was refused due to lack of information relating to ensuring the proposed visibility splays could be delivered to meet standards, and maintain the safety of highways users. A more accurate plan to demonstrate these has been provided and the Council has confirmed that it no longer considers this to be an issue. I have seen nothing that would lead me to a different conclusion.
13. Therefore, the proposal would not be contrary to the Framework or Policy CS13 of the CS which, taken together and amongst other objectives, requires road safety to be a key consideration for all development.

Other matters

14. I note that there are third party objections on other matters, including loss of light, overlooking, drainage and construction concerns. However, given my findings on the main issues I have not had reason to consider these further.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Tim Crouch

INSPECTOR